

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3555

INFO AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

UNCLAS JOHANNESBURG 1133

CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

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TAGS: ELAB, SF

SUBJ: POLICE CRACKDOWN ON BLACK WILDCAT STRIKE AT SOWETO'S

BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL DRAMATIZES APPALLING CONTRAST

BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICA'S WORDS & DEEDS IN FIELD OF RACE

RELATIONS

REF: JOHANNESBURG 1130

1. AT A TIME WHEN THE NATIONALISTS ARE RESPONDING TO INCREASING
PRESSURE AND OBLOQUY FROM ALL SIDES WITH UNPRECEDENTED EFFORTS TO
CONVINCE THE OUTSIDE WORLD THAT SOUTH AFRICA IS IN THE PROCESS OF
MAKING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD HUMANIZING ITS RACIAL POLICIES
THEY ARE CONTINUING TO BETRAY THE BASIC HOLLOWNESS OF THEIR SELF-
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SERVING SEMANTICS BY FOLLOWING THE EVEN TENOR OF THEIR WAY &

COUNTENANCING SUCH GROSSLY DISCRIMINATORY ACTIONS AS THE ARREST ON OCTOBER 29 OF LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF STRIKING BLACK WORKERS AT SOWETO'S GOVERNMENT-ADMINISTERED BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL.

2. THESE UNORGANIZED BLACK GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES CALLED AN ADMITTEDLY ILLEGAL STRIKE (AS MANY THOUSANDS OF OTHER UNORGANIZED BLACK WORKERS HAVE DONE IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS) BECAUSE THEY KNEW NO OTHER WAY TO GIVE EFFECTIVE EXPRESSION TO THE FRUSTRATION AND INDIGNATION WITH NOT RECEIVING AS OF THE END OF OCTOBER, THE SAG-APPROVED WAGE INCREASES WHICH WERE SUPPOSED TO GO INTO EFFECT JULY 1 (AND WHICH ACCORDING TO NO LESS A PERSON THAN THE PRIME MINISTER HIMSELF, WERE SUPPOSED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT NARROWING THE "TRADITIONAL" WAGE GAP BETWEEN WHITE AND BLACK GOVERNMENT WORKERS). THE RAND DAILY MAIL PRINTED AN ANGRY EDITORIAL IN ITS OCTOBER 30 EDITION WHICH USED THE BARAGWANATH ARRESTS TO POINT UP THE BLATANT CONTRAST BETWEEN RECENT NATIONALIST WORDS AND DEEDS. THE FOLLOWING TEXT OF THE EDITORIAL FOLLOWS:

QTE BACK TO THE BAD OLD DAYS

QTE TRAGICALLY, SOUTH AFRICA WENT RIGHT BACK TO THE BAD OLD DAYS YESTERDAY WITH THE ARREST OF MORE THAN 500 AFRICAN WORKERS AT BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL. COMING IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERGLOW OF THOSE FINE WORDS ABOUT HUMAN RELATIONS FROM THE PRIME MINISTER & THE COUNTRY'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, THE ARRESTS ARE ALL THE MORE A MATTER FOR DEEP REGRET.

QTE GRANTED THAT THE WORKERS WERE ILLEGALLY ON STRIKE. BUT REMEMBER THAT THE LAW ALSO DENIES THEM THE RIGHT TO TRADE UNIONISM AS A CHANNEL FOR NEGOTIATION. AND IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT ANY EMPLOYER WOULD HAVE SUMMONED THE POLICE TO EFFECT MASS ARRESTS HAD THE WORKERS CONCERNED BEEN WHITE? OF COURSE NOT.

QTE THE HOSPITAL'S DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT, DR L. FAIVELSOHN, ACTED PRECIPITATELY AND AUTOCRATICALLY IN CALLING FOR THE POLICE. AND THE POLICE ACTION IN ARRESTING THE WORKERS AND THEN RELEASING THEM WITH THE THREAT THAT THEY WOULD BE PROSECUTED UNLESS THEY RETURNED TO WORK IS A FORM OF STRIKE-BREAKING BLACKMAIL WHICH DOES NOT ACCORD WITH THE "NEW" SOUTH AFRICA SEEKING DIALOGUE
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WITH BLACK AFRICA.

QTE THERE MUST ALSO BE CONCERN IN THE REASON FOR THE STRIKE, FOR IT APPEARS THAT THE WORKERS' GRIEVANCE COULD HARDLY HAVE BEEN MORE LEGITIMATE. THEY WERE PROMISED PAY INCREASES EFFECTIVE FROM JULY 1 BUT IT TRANSPIRED THIS WEEK THAT WHAT ARE CALLED TECHNICAL PROBLEMS PREVENTED THE RISES BEING GIVEN NOW. WHAT SORT OF ADMINISTRATIVE INCOMPETENCE DOES THIS REVEAL?

QTE CAPPING THE WHOLE SORRY MESS IS DR. FAIVELSOHN'S HOARY
CHESTNUT OF IMPUTING BLAME TO MYSTERIOUS FIGURES ALLEGEDLY
BEHIND THE STRIKE.

QTE ARE WE EVER GOING TO LEARN? UNQTE.
GUTHRIE

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